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Classification Evaluation of Professional Librarian Positions in the University of Michigan Library

In response to a recognized need, the classification levels of professional positions in the University of Michigan library were recently reviewed by an appointed staff committee. The procedure is described for analyzing each position through conferences between an interviewer and the position's incumbent and supervisor; for devising an evaluation chart with numerical values for the measurable requirements and responsibilities in the position; for applying the evaluation chart to individual position descriptions; and for determining the classification grade of the position.

IN THE PAST quarter century, libraries have increasingly adopted from business and other professions the principle of position classification as a means to assure equitable salary and status for positions which may vary in duties but which have the same level of qualifications and responsibilities. The patronage system no longer suffices in an era of great competition for qualified personnel, who must work together in large, closely organized groups.

NEED FOR REVIEW

In the recent past, changes have occurred in the library profession which accentuate the need for even more refined distinction in classifications for professional librarians.

New specialties for libraries and librarians have developed from scientific discoveries and technological innovations, from social and cultural shifts, and from changed emphases in world affairs. Libraries reflect these changes not only

in enlarged collections but also in the creation of whole new sub-collections, thus creating in turn personnel problems which are inherent in large staffs, but more specifically in large staffs with unusual constituent specializations.

The University of Michigan library became heir to these personnel problems as it met changing needs by adding general professional staff and professional specialists. It soon became evident that the classification scheme for professional positions in use for the past decade was no longer adequate for current or anticipated requirements. It consisted of a brief statement of the degree of independence in performance, a list of typical positions, and the minimum qualifications for each of five professional levels. Accordingly, in June 1963, a Classification Evaluation Committee was appointed and delegated by the director of the university library to review all professional positions in the university library to determine the appropriateness of their classification, and to prepare an evaluation instrument for future staff expansion.

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PRELIMINARY PROCEDURE

Appointment of Committee. The committee was composed of five staff members: the head of science and engineering branch libraries, the head of non-science branch libraries, the head of the undergraduate library, the head of a technical services department, and the personnel officer.

As a first step, the committee sought counsel from a professor and an administrator of the school of business administration concerning principles and procedure of position classification.

Helpful Literature. As general background preparation the committee read accounts of various systems for evaluating position classifications. The most helpful articles and books for this purpose were, in order of usefulness:

Otis, Jay L., and Leukart, Richard H. *Job Evaluation: a Basis for Sound Wage Administration*. 2d ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961.

Library Association. Membership Committee. *Professional and Non-Professional Duties in Libraries; a Descriptive List Compiled by a Sub-Committee of the Membership Committee*. London: Library Association, 1963.

Hay, Edward N., and Purves, Dale, "The Profile Method of High-Level Job Evaluation," *Personnel*, XXVIII (September 1951), 162-70.

Hay, Edward N., "Setting Salary Standards for Executive Jobs," *Personnel*, XXXIV (January-February 1958), 63-72.

Hay, Edward N., "Any Job Can Be Measured by Its 'Know, Think, Do' Elements," *Personnel Journal*, XXXVI (April 1958), 403-406.

Jaques, Elliott. *Measurement of Responsibility: a Study of Work, Payment, and Individual Capacity*. London: Tavistock Publications, Ltd., 1956.

Hill, J. M. M., "The Time-Span of Discretion in Job Analysis," *Human Relations*, IX (August 1956), 295-323.

Selection of Evaluation System. Of four major evaluation systems carefully considered (point rating and factor comparison as representative of quantitative

systems; and job ranking and grade description as representative of non-quantitative systems), the committee judged the point rating and factor comparison systems as the most applicable to its needs. In a point rating system, compensable characteristics or factors common to all positions to be evaluated are determined; each factor is divided into a series of degrees, to each of which is assigned a progressive point value. Each position is analyzed against this scale, and it receives a numerical rating according to the total of point values; this numerical rating can in turn be translated into a classification level.

In the factor comparison system, positions are evaluated by comparing them with one or several positions which have been designated as acceptably classified. The comparison is made on the basis of a few basic factors common to all positions, such as mental requirements, and kind and level of responsibility. After extended study, the point rating system was considered preferable to the factor comparison system, principally because of the former system's precision of applicability.

FORMULATION OF EVALUATION CHART

Determination of Factors. The committee's first goal in constructing a point rating system specifically for use in the university library was the determination of the factors governing the classification of the library's professional positions, and their definitions. The factors fell into two groups: those deriving from formal or informal education, or from acquired experience in an area relevant to the requirements of the position; and those involving types and levels of responsibilities in the position. The specific factors chosen were important but limited to a manageable number, applicable and measurable in some degree to all positions, definable in practical terms, and not overlapping in meaning (thus giving double value). Each factor was defined clearly so that interpreta-

tions would be as uniform and consistent as possible. The final factors and definitions which evolved were the following:

Job knowledge—education and experience. (Academic background required to perform at the professional librarian level, exclusive of on-the-job training; knowledge, skill, or technique resulting from experience in a given area or areas of professional library work).

A. *Responsibility*—problem-solving and decision-making. (Requirements for resourcefulness, imagination, analytical ability, and mental agility in solving problems and making decisions. The complexity, number, and scope of the problems and decisions are considered, but not the independence of performance allowed in problem-solving and decision-making.)

B. *Responsibility*—independence of performance. (Extent of independence and degree of freedom of action.)

C. *Responsibility*—work of others. (Number and level of personnel supervised [professional, nonprofessional, part-time]; and kind [direct and indirect] and extent of supervision given.)

D. *Responsibility*—relationships with others. (Extent and relative difficulty and importance of contacts with other staff members and the public [students, faculty, visitors, nonlibrary staff of the university, representatives of other institutions, businesses], in connection with the effect these contacts may have on library or university relations; includes common forms of communication: personal, telephone, correspondence; excludes all aspects of supervision.)

An additional factor, "Responsibility for Collections or Materials," was seriously considered for inclusion, but was ultimately omitted because bibliographic responsibility for collections or materials was inherent in the factor, "Responsibility for Problem-Solving and Decision-Making," and because no position in the library was held completely responsible for physical collections or materials.

Determination and Definition of Degrees. The second goal in constructing a specific point rating system was the determination of the number of degrees for each factor, and their definitions. Precise

criteria were observed in determining the number, which was limited to the minimum adequate for clear distinctions between duties and responsibilities of all positions to be examined, and in determining the structuring of the definitions so that one or more positions would fall within each degree. Also, in defining each degree, as many measurable qualities and terms were included as possible, for example, "two years of experience," "work product always checked," and "direction of the work of ten or more persons." The final determination of five degrees for each of the five factors was strictly coincidental and had no relationship to the five classification levels previously recognized in the university library, or to the number of classification levels which ultimately evolved.

Determination of Degree Point Values. To assign point values to the individual degrees of the factors, the five factors were grouped in a descending arrangement relating each to the others (they were subsequently rearranged in the evaluation chart), and a percentage value was assigned to the first degree of each factor, the total equaling 100 per cent. The point value for the remaining degrees was calculated by a geometric progression, using a ratio of one to ten. Geometric progression was chosen in preference to arithmetic progression in order that the value of each degree would increase a specified percentage above the preceding one, rather than by an equal amount in each instance. The content of successive degrees of each factor was constructed in a regular gradation to the preceding degree, so that a regular progression of values would result.

Thus was evolved the final form of the evaluation chart (Fig. 1). Throughout the period of its formulation, a persistent effort was made to incorporate equity among individual positions, groups of positions, and types of work, and to assure commensurate value for

JOB FACTORS	FIRST DEGREE	SECOND DEGREE	THIRD DEGREE	FOURTH DEGREE	FIFTH DEGREE
I. JOB KNOWLEDGE Education and Experience. (Academic background required to perform at the professional librarian level, exclusive of on-the-job training; knowledge, skill, or technique resulting from experience in a given area or areas of professional library work.)	Graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree (or ABLIS plus experience), plus requisite languages, and less than two years of general experience; OR requisite specialized education, and one year or less of requisite specialized experience.	Graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus requisite languages, and two years of requisite experience or three years of general experience; OR graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus a working knowledge of at least two requisite languages; OR requisite specialized education, and two years of requisite specialized experience.	Graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus requisite languages, and three years of requisite experience or four years of general experience; OR graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus a working knowledge of at least three requisite languages, and a cumulative ability attainable in three years of progressively advanced requisite experience; OR requisite education, plus requisite languages, and three years of requisite experience.	Graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus an undergraduate degree or major in the requisite subject field, plus requisite languages, and four years of requisite experience; OR graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus a working knowledge of at least three requisite languages, and a cumulative ability attainable in four years of progressively advanced requisite experience; OR requisite education, plus requisite languages, and four years of requisite experience.	Graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus a master's degree in the requisite subject field, plus requisite languages, and five years of requisite experience; OR graduation from an accredited library school with an AMLS degree, plus a working knowledge of at least three requisite languages, and a cumulative ability attainable in five years of progressively advanced requisite experience; OR requisite education, plus requisite languages, and five years of requisite experience.
II. RESPONSIBILITY A. Problem-Solving and Decision-Making. (Requirements for resourcefulness, imagination, analytical ability, and mental agility in solving problems and making decisions. The complexity, number, and scope of the problems and decisions are considered, but not the independence of performance allowed in problem-solving and decision-making.)	Responsibility for solution of simple problems occurring in standardized and repetitive procedures, and requiring little imaginative interpretation; and for making easy decisions requiring minimal analytical ability, and of limited scope.	Responsibility for solution of problems occurring in repetitive and complex, or varied and simple procedures, and requiring analytical ability and imaginative interpretation; and for making decisions rarely affecting either procedures or policies.	Responsibility for solution of problems which are usually clearly defined, occurring in varied and complex procedures, sometimes involving simultaneous solution of several problems, and requiring analytical ability and a moderate degree of resourcefulness; and for making decisions usually complex and possibly resulting in changed procedures or policy within a department, divisional library, or Divisional Library Group.	Responsibility for solution of complex and non-repetitive problems (originating in a department, or in a divisional library of 50,000 or more volumes) occurring in broadly defined procedures, involving simultaneous solution of many problems, and requiring imagination, resourcefulness, and analytical ability in the definition and solution of the problems; and for making many decisions complex and broad in scope, involving interpretation of library policy, frequently resulting in changed procedures, and occasionally in the formulation of library policy.	Responsibility for solution of numerous and simultaneous problems occurring in broadly defined procedures, requiring a high degree of imagination, resourcefulness, and analytical ability, and considerable time to interpret and coordinate reports and other information gathered from various sources as assistance; and for making numerous decisions frequently library-wide in scope, frequently made under pressure of time and importance, and often resulting in the formulation of library policy.

<p>B. Independence of Performance.</p> <p>(Extent of independence and degree of freedom of action.)</p>	<p>Independence to perform within detailed instructions or close supervision, with work product, if any, always checked; no freedom to set work goals.</p>	<p>Independence to perform within established procedures, with work product frequently checked; some freedom to set work goals.</p>	<p>Independence to perform within established procedures, with work product occasionally checked; occasional freedom to set work goals and methods of accomplishment within departmental or divisional library policy.</p>	<p>Independence to perform in a broad assignment below the level of a head of a department or a Divisional Library Group, with work product rarely checked; frequent freedom to set work goals within departmental or divisional library policy, and wide latitude in freedom to choose methods of accomplishment.</p>	<p>Under general supervision of the Directors, complete independence to perform, to set work goals, and to choose methods of accomplishment within Library policy.</p>
<p>C. Work of Others.</p> <p>(Number and level of personnel supervised [professional, non-professional, part-time]; and kind [direct and indirect] and extent of supervision given.)</p>	<p>Responsibility for the quality and accuracy of one's own work, with only occasional and minor supervisory responsibility for the work of others.</p>	<p>Direct responsibility for initial training and succeeding general supervision of the work of professional, non-professional, or part-time personnel who are expected to perform assigned tasks within established general practices.</p>	<p>Direct or indirect responsibility for general direction of the work of less than 10 persons (full-time equivalents) forming a departmental unit, OR of the work of the staff in a divisional library of less than 50,000 volumes.</p>	<p>Direct or indirect responsibility for general direction of the work of 10 or more persons (full-time equivalents) forming a departmental unit, OR of the work of the staff in a divisional library of 50,000 or more volumes.</p>	<p>Full responsibility, under the general supervision of the Directors, for general administrative direction of the work of a department or Divisional Library Group.</p>
<p>D. Relationships with Others.</p> <p>(Extent and relative difficulty and importance of contacts with other staff members and the public [students, faculty, visitors, non-Library staff of the University, representatives of other institutions, businesses], in connection with the effect these contacts may have on Library or University relations; includes common forms of communication: personal, telephone, correspondence; excludes all aspects of supervision.)</p>	<p>Occasional contacts with staff members of other departments or divisional libraries on matters involving standardized procedures; OR contacts of a purely routine nature with students and faculty in a public service position.</p>	<p>Frequent contacts with staff members of other departments or divisional libraries on matters involving standardized procedures; OR contacts with all categories of the Library's public on matters involving standardized procedures.</p>	<p>Regular contacts with staff members of other departments or divisional libraries on matters which are occasionally complex; OR contacts with all categories of the Library's public in circumstances involving the possible loss of good will through misunderstanding (however, an immediate or higher supervisor has direct responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationships.)</p>	<p>Regular contacts with staff members of other departments or divisional libraries on matters requiring coordination of a succession of contacts; AND contacts with all categories of the Library's public in circumstances involving the possible loss of good will through misunderstanding or mishandling (however, an immediate or higher supervisor has direct responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationships.)</p>	<p>Regular contacts with staff members of other departments or divisional libraries on matters requiring coordination of a succession of contacts; AND contacts with all categories of the Library's public, with direct responsibility for creating and maintaining good public relations for the Library.</p>

FIG. 1—CHART FOR CLASSIFICATION EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY

POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE _____ Name of Librarian _____ Immediate Supervisor _____	Department _____ Section _____ Unit _____ Dates Analyzed ____/____/____
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JOB SUMMARY:

WORK PERFORMED:

% of
Time

Fig. 2—Position description form.

skills learned cumulatively in a field where formal education was not available. (Degree point values, which are confidential, have been omitted from the illustration.)

DESCRIPTIONS OF POSITIONS

Simultaneously, while the committee was constructing the evaluation chart, descriptions of the positions to be examined were being prepared by a group of interviewers, composed of a nonstaff professional librarian, and graduate students in library science or business administration.

Procedure of Interviewers. Following a procedure and schedule of assignment prepared by the committee, an interviewer conferred with the incumbent in each position to be examined. From information gained in the initial conference, the interviewer drafted a position description on a printed form (Fig. 2). The incumbent and his immediate supervisor separately reviewed the draft in successive conferences with the interviewer, who was expected to resolve

differences of opinion or expression for the final form of the description.

Each description attempted to analyze a position, and to present its duties and responsibilities as they were expected to be performed, not necessarily as they were being performed by a possibly over- or underqualified incumbent.

APPLICATION OF EVALUATION CHART

As descriptions of groups of positions were prepared, they were reviewed by the committee for the purpose of assigning a classification grade by application of the evaluation chart. In applying the chart, the committee analyzed the position for each of the five factors, and for a degree within each factor, ignoring insofar as possible the identity of the incumbent to prevent personal preference or discrimination, and attempting to weight the position equitably in relation to every other position reviewed.

Examination of the evaluation chart will show that each degree was designed to accommodate duties or qualifications which are disparate in kind, but which

GROUPINGS OF POSITIONS BY TOTAL POINTS

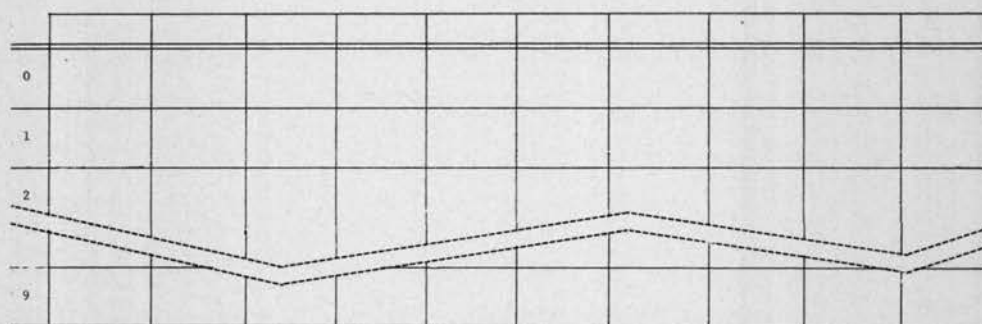


Fig. 5—Ancillary record to insure uniformity in applying evaluation chart.

total point values (Fig. 5); columns were headed by multiples of ten, and sufficient forms were prepared to accommodate the entire range of points for all the classification grades).

DETERMINATION OF CLASSIFICATION GRADE

To determine the classification grade of a position, the point values were totaled for the five selected degrees. This total was translated into a classification grade by comparing it to a range of points which had been developed for all the grades as follows:

CLASSIFICATION GRADE	POINT RANGE
Librarian I	a - b
Librarian II	b+1 - c
Librarian III A	c+1 - d
B	d+1 - e
Librarian IV A	e+1 - f
B	f+1 - g
Librarian V	g+1 - h

Note: Letters indicate confidential figures.

As the review of positions proceeded, a system of the five classification grades above evolved as the most efficient and equitable structure for university library requirements. A need was recognized for an intermediary step in the third and fourth grades because of the greater number of positions and the wider scope of responsibilities which clustered at

these levels, and accordingly plus-grade "B" was introduced at these points. This was possible because a greater salary differential is maintained between higher grades. The plus-grades were intended for internal library administration only, although they may be used on organization charts and similar library materials.

Upon completion of the review of positions in each department, the respective department head received from the committee a copy of the evaluation chart (with point values omitted) and a list showing the recommended classification grade for each position in his department. If requested by the department head, the committee met with him to discuss or clarify any differences of view.

Twenty-one months after its inception, the committee held its forty-eighth and final meeting, and submitted its findings and recommendations to the director. One hundred and five positions had been described (at an average of thirty interviewer's hours per position), and had been reviewed and evaluated by the committee, resulting in a recommendation for the upgrading of fifty-six positions by one or more levels, and the downgrading of seven positions. All staff members had previously been assured that no incumbent would be downgraded as a result of the review, but that

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JOB SPECIFICATION

POSITION TITLE _____

Department _____

Section _____

Name of Librarian _____

Unit _____

Immediate Supervisor _____

Total Points _____

Classification _____

JOB KNOWLEDGE

POINTS _____

Education:

Academic Degrees:

Languages:

Other Specialized Education:

Experience:

Years: 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 or more _____

General and/or specialized: _____

ANALYTICAL REQUIREMENT

POINTS _____

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:

NATURE AND EXTENT OF INDEPENDENT PERFORMANCE

POINTS _____

NATURE AND DEGREE OF SUPERVISION

POINTS _____

NATURE AND EXTENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

POINTS _____

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Fig. 6—Recommended job specification form.

downgrading of the position would become effective only when it was vacant. Consummation of the review occurred at the beginning of the current fiscal year, when a special salary appropriation enabled the upgrading of fifty-one of the positions recommended for a higher level of classification. The remaining five positions were not upgraded on that date because of structural or personnel changes which had occurred during the review period of more than a year and a half.

The committee submitted an addendum with its report, suggesting a procedure and schedule for a continual review of position classifications in the university library, and recommending the preparation of a job specification for each position (Fig. 6).

The review achieved more than its immediate goals of attempting to relate equitably each position to all other positions in the university library, and to provide an evaluation instrument and system with flexibility to encompass not only a greater number of positions but also a greater variety of specialties. It served also to bring to recognition the commensurate value of public and technical positions, of independent and supervisory positions, and of the many specialties possible within the library profession, including those learned informally and cumulatively as well as those derived from formal education. Finally, it provided within the library profession, as it exists in other professions, a recognition of the value of intellectually independent performance. ■■

Notes on Footnotes

The *coy* footnote says, in effect, "I could tell you a lot more if you were really interested."

The *hidden ball* footnote says, in effect, "If I snow you with enough references you won't bother to ask what I'm trying to say."

The *play-your-aces* footnote: "Now I have to mention this somewhere, but I don't know where to get it in." Don't go to bed with a piece of information that you haven't got out somewhere.

The *false modesty* footnote: "I don't want to parade my learning, but I've read a lot of books."

The *Madison Avenue* footnote: "Please read my other books" or "See my essay on . . ."

The *I-know-more-than-you-do* footnote: Use a lot of foreign languages in these. It's terribly learned—and besides, there's a good chance the reader won't be able to translate them anyway.

The *looking-down-your-nose* footnote: "I don't like to get into this, but I can't let it pass."

The *bet-you-forgot* footnote: "*vide supra*—I have mentioned this before, although you may not recall it."

The *snob or little-brother-of-the-great* footnote: "As Mr. Y (Miss X), the celebrated writer (actress) once remarked to the author . . ."

The *"I'm-no-fool"* footnote: "Yes, I've read Professor Z's book too."

The *strategic retreat* footnote: "In earlier days I held the view that—, but I have now come about." You don't have to say how.

The *let's-forget-about-it* footnote: "I still adhere to my earlier view, but I don't want to discuss it."

The *I'll-take-credit-for-this* (even though it may not be entirely original) footnote: "With apologies to professor A—." (You don't really have to know what A said, or whether he said it or not.)

And finally, the *flattery* footnote: "The reader will naturally recall . . ." (If he does, he's pleased; if he doesn't, he's pleased that you thought he might.)—Philip H. Rinelander, Stanford University, in the Edpress Newsletter as quoted in the Phi Delta Kappan, June 1963. ■■